

Series II
Subjects Files,
1916-1973

Box 13, Folder 12

May 1964 -
July 1964

0807



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

BUREAU OF NAVAL PERSONNEL

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20370

IN REPLY REFER TO

18 May 1964

Dear Admiral Bates,

Thank you for your letter of 8 May 1964. I am sure that you realize my distress at being in the middle in this case of misunderstanding between BuPers and a distinguished Naval officer such as yourself. Since talking with you, I have telephoned Admiral Smedberg in Florida; he informed me in no uncertain terms that it was his understanding you were to be recalled as a Commodore. He regrets that any other impression was gained by you. Following this conversation, I talked with Admiral Ricketts, Admiral McDonald, Admiral Eller, informing them of the difficulty that had arisen. As a result, the decision has been made that to recall you as Commodore is the best we can offer.

We have been advised by the Senate Committee that recall of retired flag officers in their combat grades could well, among other things, require a reexamination of the Committee limitation on the number of officers serving in flag grade. Consequently, because of the implied danger of having retired flag officers serving on active duty counted against the numerical ceiling, it has long been the policy of the Secretary of the Navy to recall retired flag officers in their permanent grade rather than the combat grade when extended active duty is anticipated. There have been infrequent exceptions to this policy, but only under most unusual exceptions and not before the Senate Committee had been advised beforehand of the proposed action and full justification therefor.

A communication from the Chairman of the Sub-committee of the Senate advised "that the recall of retired officers to active service in a grade higher than that in which they served on active duty could raise certain problems. First there would be the result that such recalled persons in effect would receive a promotion without any selection proceedings insofar as active pay is concerned. This would tend to vitiate the entire selection and nomination process."

If you are willing to be recalled in the grade of Commodore, I would appreciate being so advised, together with the names of the officers and men you desire to assist you.

PEOPLE TO THE FORE IN 1964

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After all your consideration of me during my tours in Newport, I am most regretful to be the one who passes to you this news which I know you will find disappointing. I trust you will realize that the decision is one that the Navy has taken because of a due regard to its relations with the Senate Committee. I wish we could be more liberal in your case but this is not to be.

With warm and respectful wishes, I am

Most sincerely,



B. J. SEMMES, Jr.
Vice Admiral, U.S. Navy

Rear Admiral R. W. Bates, USN (Ret.)
12 Mount Vernon Street
Newport, Rhode Island

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12 Mt. Vernon Street
Newport, Rhode Island
27 May 1964

Dear Smeddy:

You can imagine my surprise when I received a letter several days ago from the Chief of Naval Personnel, who, by the way, is an old friend of mine, relative to my returning to duty as a Commodore. I had told him a few days earlier in Washington that you had told me that I was to be recalled to active duty as a Rear Admiral, and I could not understand how this fact had become mislaid during the turnover of command.

In the letter referred to above, Admiral Semmes states, "I have telephoned Admiral Smedberg in Florida; he informed me, in no uncertain terms, that it was his understanding that you were to be recalled as a Commodore." And so I am writing to you to endeavor to recall to you the sequence of events which led you to tell me that you would recall me as a Rear Admiral. I would not bother you with this were it not for the fact that there was a competent witness present who has generally verified my statements; and, therefore, the forgetfulness must have been with you rather than with me. And why not? You were very busy finishing out a memorable career, and there were many things you had to handle every day which were more important and more pressing than mine were. And so, if you will bear with me, I will present the situation as I remembered it.

I had been recalled to active duty at the Naval War College in 1949 and had remained on active duty as a Commodore until the summer of 1958. (Actually, I came back to the War College after I retired; and although in mufti, I completed in early 1959 my Volume V of the Battle for Leyte Gulf. This drew a commendatory personal letter from the CNO (Admiral Arleigh Burke). During these nine years, I did not receive any raise of any kind (including longevity) excepting those incident to the pay bills. Meanwhile, I had discovered that if a retired Rear Admiral, drawing the pay of a Rear Admiral (lower half), is recalled to active duty as a Rear Admiral and serves satisfactorily for two years, he moves automatically into the pay grade of upper half. This is the so-called Byrd Amendment. Because of this, I went to the DOD and suggested that the 1958 pay bill have a clause to the effect that a Commodore recalled to active duty in that grade and serving satisfactorily

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for five years be given a longevity increase corresponding to the Byrd Amendment. Since the pay of a Commodore and a Rear Admiral (lower half) are the same, the DOD was friendly to this, and Colonel Leo Benade, U. S. Army, was directed to handle my case before the Armed Services Committee in joint session, which he did. Needless to say, his request caused great surprise. The Chairman said that no Commodores were on active duty now. Colonel Benade explained the situation, and the Chairman said, "Well, he ought to have some recognition, but since we are removing Admiral Radford from the pay bill, we will have to remove him also." And that was that, although I could not see how Admiral Radford's problem could affect me, as I was on active duty, and he was retired. As a matter of fact, the legal adviser to Senate Armed Services Committee told Colonel Benade that I should take my case before the Court of Claims, as he thought it very worthy.

Well, I did not do so. However, when the 1963 pay bill was about to be enacted, I tried again, and once again Colonel Benade handled my case. However, about this time, he was transferred to Europe. So I decided to invoke the aid of Senator Claiborne Pell of Rhode Island to get a rider similar to that for the 1958 pay bill attached to the 1963 pay bill. After considerable study, he decided that I had a just case, and wrote to you, as Chief of Naval Personnel, to obtain your support. You recommended against it in order to avoid inter-service irritation. I wrote a letter, pointing out that since Commodore was not really the equivalent rank for Brigadier General but that Rear Admiral (lower half) was, I could not see how there could be inter-service irritation. There were no ranks equivalent to Commodore in the sister services. You then told me that you had learned a lot from these discussions and were going to straighten things out for me. You walked over to the window and looking out said, "I am going to bring you back to duty as a Rear Admiral -- I can do that -- and we will write at least one more volume of your Leyte series. I will keep you on duty for two years or more." This I understood was to place me after two years under the Byrd Amendment. I asked how I could get a two-year guarantee, and you said that you could order me for one year and would give me a gentleman's agreement on the next year. I felt highly honored at your understanding of the problem and your readiness to adjust the situation accordingly. You then told me to get myself physically checked to see if I could do the job without danger to myself or to my disability rating. This I did. It was favorable, and I so reported to you. You then told me to take my California holiday, and you would work it out.

Finally, as to my qualifications to wear the coveted two stars, let's look at part of the record.

(a) After the Battle of Suragao Strait Admiral Oldendorf sent a message to the CinC Pacific, Fleet (Admiral C. W. Nimitz). It was to the effect, "Recommend that Captain Richard W. Bates, Signal No. 9027, be immediately promoted to Rear Admiral for demonstrated superiority in action against the enemy."

(b) After the Battle of Lingayan Gulf in January 1944, Fleet Admiral Nimitz sent his Chief of Staff (Vice Admiral Charles McMorris) to Washington to get me promoted to Rear Admiral. He invited Admiral Oldendorf and me to Guam, gave me the Secretary's of the Navy room to sleep in and the following day sent Admiral Oldendorf and me in his personal plane to Washington. He directed me to deliver a personal message to the Secretary of the Navy. (In other words, I was the bearer of dispatches.)

(c) I was told by the CNO (Admiral Forrest Sherman), by SACLANT (Admiral Lynde McCormick) and by the President of the Naval War College (Vice Admiral Richard Conolly) almost exactly the same thing, "It is too bad you would not shut up. If you had, you would surely have had three stars and probably four!"

So much for that!

I am confident that those in BuPers, whom I contacted about this at the time, and later, were all of the opinion that I was to be recalled as a Rear Admiral. If you agree with the above, I should appreciate your courtesy if you would so advise Admiral Semmes.

I hope that you are enjoying your Florida holiday! You certainly have needed one for a long time. As for myself, I find Newport wonderful at this time of the year! I'm sure you would too.

Sincerely yours,

R. W. BATES

Vice Admiral William Smedberg, U. S. Navy (Ret.)
Box 178
Crystal River, Florida

0812

Adm. Ricketts, Vice CNO, Dies

WASHINGTON (AP) — Adm. Claude V. Ricketts, 58, vice chief of naval operations, died today at the Bethesda Naval Hospital of a heart attack.

The Navy Department said Ricketts had entered the hospital Friday.

A naval aviator, Ricketts commanded the 5th Amphibious Force during the invasions of Tarawa, Eniwetok, Saipan, Tinian, Iwo Jima and Okinawa and took part in the occupation of Japan at the end of World War II.

Born Feb. 23, 1906, in Greene County, Mo., he was a 1929 graduate of the Naval Academy. He became a pilot in 1932.

Funeral plans have not been completed.

Survivors include his widow and two sons, both naval officers, Lt. M. V. Ricketts and Ens. James B. Ricketts.

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

In reply refer to
Op-09/hl
Ser 35P09

From: Chief of Naval Operations
To: Distribution List

Subj: Research and Analysis of Naval Battles of World War II,
establishment of project for

Encl: (1) Five copies of Memorandum of Understanding

1. Subject project is hereby established. The project shall be conducted in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding attached hereto as enclosure (1).

Distribution:

Chief of Naval Personnel
Commandant, First Naval District
President, Naval War College, Newport, R. I.
Commander, U. S. Naval Base, Newport, R. I.
Commanding Officer, U. S. Naval Station, Naval Base
Newport, R. I.

Copy to: (with 3 copies of encl (1))
RADM R. W. Bates, USN (Ret.)
ONR (Code 300)
Op-702E

Prep. by Dr. H. O. Johnson
BuPers, Pers-C1b, Room 3072
NA2012, 25 May 1964

Miss Watson CX 41095

0814

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

SUBJECT: Research and Analysis of Naval Battles of World War II.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the project is to conduct research on the major naval battles of World War II and precisely record and analyze the researched material.

RESPONSIBILITY: The Chief of Naval Personnel is assigned executive responsibility for subject project with Dr. H. O. Johnson, Pers-Clb, Bureau of Naval Personnel, named as Project Manager for the Chief of Naval Personnel.

TIME SPAN: It is estimated that a period of approximately two years will be needed to complete subject project, but in any event the project is to be completed not later than 30 June 1966.

ORDERS: The Chief of Naval Personnel will order appropriate personnel to report to the Commander, U. S. Naval Base, Newport, R. I., for duty in connection with continuing research and analysis of the war in the Pacific. Personnel so ordered will be ordered further to the U. S. Naval Station, Naval Base, Newport, R. I., as the site for performing the research and analysis.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT:

a. General

FY 64 funds in the amount of \$10,606 will be provided by the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Development. Additional funds will be provided depending on future evaluation of this project and the availability of funds to support it. The total amount of funds will not exceed \$35,000 programmed for the full life of the project. Requests for funds shall be made on an annual basis. Funds made available for this project shall be used for all essential expenses other than pay and allowances of active duty Navy personnel.

b. Funding Allocation and Controls

Funds will be allocated on the basis of quarterly request for requirements to the Project Manager, by NavCompt 372 Allotment Authorization citing funds specifically for Project Title to:

Activity Acct. No. & Address: 62660 Commanding Officer
U. S. Naval Station
Newport, R. I.

Copy to: Allotment Accounting
Number and Office 298 Commanding Officer
U. S. Naval Supply
Depot
Newport, R. I.

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Administrator of Fund

Local Project Officer or his
representative to be designated
by name in accord with
NAVCOMPT MAN 032003-1.

c. Appropriate Charges to Project Fund

Project funds shall be used for all essential expenses other than the pay and allowances of active duty Navy personnel. Appropriate charges to project funds shall include cost of:

- (1) Furniture, furnishings, and equipment not available from surplus
- (2) Civilian clerical or technical labor
- (3) Consumable office supplies, printing, printing services, and publications
- (4) Travel
- (5) Public works reimbursements for telephone and tolls, janitorial services, transportation services and tolls, and vehicular assignments
- (6) Facility modifications, alterations or related items over and above normal cyclical maintenance and repair of assigned spaces.

OFFICE SPACE, FURNITURE & EQUIPMENT:

- a. COMMANDING OFFICER NAVSTANPT will provide offices located at the southwest end, second deck of Building 87A and will assume costs for required heat, light, and normal cyclical maintenance and repair for these spaces.
- b. COMMANDING OFFICER NAVSTANPT will provide assistance in obtaining such furniture, furnishings and equipment as may be available from area surplus.
- c. PROHIBITION. No additional "Out-of-Pocket" costs shall be required nor shall charges be incurred against other government funds (appropriated or non-appropriated) in support of this project.

LIBRARY SERVICES:

The President, Naval War College, Newport, R. I., will make materials on file in the NWC library available for research and reference. This assistance does not extend to procurement services either with cost or at no cost to the Naval War College. Furnishing of library material and services must necessarily be on a basis of non-interference

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with the requirements of the staff and students of the College. Information will be issued to project personnel in accordance with the security clearances held. All Navy materials, files, charts, and the like upon the completion of subject project shall be transferred to the President, Naval War College, for appropriate disposition.

Status (February 1st, 1958) of Naval War College Analysis, Battle for Leyte Gulf:

(a) Volume I - Allied operations (COMTHIRDFLT, Admiral William F. Halsey) against the Nansei Shoto, Formosa, and northern Luzon with Japanese reactions thereto. (October 10th to 0719, October 17th, 1944). 535 pages, 12 plates, 9 diagrams (large)

COMPLETED 1953.

(b) Volume II - Allied advance operations in Leyte Gulf (CTG 77.2, Rear Admiral Jesse B. Oldendorf) with Japanese reaction thereto. (0719, October 17th to 2400, October 19th, 1944). 441 pages, 21 plates, 5 diagrams (large)

COMPLETED 1955.

(c) Volume III - Allied landing operations on Leyte (CTF 77, Vice Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid) with Japanese reaction thereto. (0000, October 20th to 1042, October 23rd, 1944). 922 pages, 46 plates, 6 diagrams (large)

COMPLETED 1957.

(d) Volume IV - The approach to Leyte Gulf by Japanese naval and air forces, and the continuity during the three battles. (1042, October 20th to 2400, October 27th, 1944). About TWENTY per cent (20%) completed.

(e) Volume V - Battle of Surigao Strait (Rear Admiral Jesse B. Oldendorf), (October 25th, 1944). 772 pages, 24 plates, 17 diagrams (large)

COMPLETED 1959.

(f) Volume VI - Battle off Samar. The battle of the CVE's (Rear Admiral Thomas Sprague) against the Japanese battleships. (October 25th, 1944). About FIVE per cent (5%) completed.

(g) Volume VII - Battle off Cape Engano. The battle between the THIRD Fleet (Admiral William F. Halsey) and the Japanese carriers. (October 25th, 1944.) TWENTY per cent (20%) completed.

Enclosure to ltr from
Rear Admiral R.W. BATES, USN(Ret.)
of 8 June 1964

ENCLOSURE (2)

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Status (February 1st, 1958) of Naval War College Analysis, Battle for Leyte Gulf:

(a) Volume I - Allied operations (COMTHIRDFLT, Admiral William F. Halsey) against the Nansei Shoto, Formosa, and northern Luzon with Japanese reactions thereto. (October 10th to 0719, October 17th, 1944). 535 pages, 12 plates, 9 diagrams (large)

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Enclosure to ltr from
Rear Admiral R. J. PATTS, USN (Ret.)
of 8 June 1964

ENCLOSURE (2)

0819

2 June 1964

Dear Admiral Semmes:

I have delayed in replying to your fine letter of the 18th instant as I wished to see how the situation was developing in this area. However I want you to know that I was very touched by your letter even though it was, as you say, disappointing. This is because I can readily feel throughout it a friendly and warm attitude towards me and my problems.

First, in reply, I wish to say that I am quite willing to come back as a Commodore. In this connection I wish also to say that I have not been anxious to come back on active duty in any rank, as I wanted a Foundation and spent several years and quite a bit of my own money in that quest. Foundations have many advantages among which are the extra funds available to obtain a competent staff, and the fact that one is not dependent upon Navy funds and Navy policies. However the Foundations have been difficult!

The unfortunate result from the Rear Admiral - Commodore discussions is that the objective "to complete another volume" has become, if not forgotten, at least obscured.

My big problem today is "where can I obtain a competent staff"? I have written to my more recent personnel and have now had replies--all in the negative. This is because they are generally well employed; one is dying of cancer! Three of my previous assistants have become Rear Admirals, one previous assistant is in command in Bermuda. So I have been scanning the First Naval District Directory of Retired Officers to endeavor to locate suitable prospects in this area. Then I have looked them up in the Register of Alumni. So far, until last Sunday, I had found no one who seemed suitable. On Sunday, I got a nibble from a fine officer (aviator who is working at General Dynamics) named Captain Neil Porter. He wished to know how many years the project was to run to which I replied "I am not sure but I think two years". He said that he was definitely interested.

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What I am after are seagoing officers, preferably graduates of the Naval War College who understand naval operations. I need, based on past experience and allowance, four Captains or Commanders (two to be naval aviators, one to be general line with some communication experience, and one a submarine officer). I also need at least two yeomen and one chief quartermaster.

I have written to Rear Admiral Cobb and also to Dr. Howard Johnson about this. Perhaps they can help.

Finally, there is always the question as to whether, with a new staff, I can complete the volume in two years. In the past, it has taken a new member about six months to get oriented--that is to be so familiar with the background as to be able to contribute towards the completion of the project. As it is, I would likely be the only one with background experience and mine is six years old! Still I feel that if I get a competent staff I can do it.

I am going to Washington tomorrow to see what can be done and to make a final decision as to whether or not to recommend going ahead.

With many thanks for your understanding attitude I am, as ever,

Your old friend,

Rafe

Vice Admiral B.J. Semmes
Chief of Naval Personnel
Washington 25, D.C.

12 Mount Vernon Street
Newport, Rhode Island
8 June 1964

Dear Admiral Semmes:

In accordance with your wishes, I have analyzed the "Memorandum of Understanding" prepared by Dr. H. O. Johnson of your office as follows:

A. Purpose: I interpret the basic purpose to be the completion of the World War II Battle Evaluation Group (WWIIBEG) study, "Battle for Leyte Gulf." This study was originally to be executed in seven volumes. The nature of these volumes and their present-day status is set forth in the enclosure.

From this enclosure, it is clear that, as of now, I have completed but four of the seven volumes, although I have done some work on the other three volumes.

A part of what was to have been included in Volume IV is now included in Volume V. This is because the verbal instructions in 1958 directing the closing of the WWIIBEG authorized the completion of Volume V - The Battle of Surigao Strait. It became necessary then to omit Volume IV and endeavor to complete Volume V. In doing this, it also became necessary to bring up the Allied operations in Volume V to a point where a proper analysis of the battle with relation to the other Allied and Japanese forces operating elsewhere in the general area, could be made. This point was set at 1830, October 24th, and therefore the above movements are included in Volume V although in much less detail than had been planned for Volume IV.

It took a little over eight years to complete the four completed volumes, or an average of one volume about every two years. Actually Volume V took about three years.

B. Operating Policy.

In doing Volumes III and V, the staff was composed of two commanders (aviation), one captain (submarines) and one captain who was familiar with communications. One of the commanders researched

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the Allied Air Operations and the movements of certain allied forces relating thereto; the other commander did likewise with the Japanese. The captain (communications) collected and clarified the dispatches, while at the same time assisting in working up the movements of naval forces on both sides. The captain (submarines) was largely employed in analyzing the Battle of Surigao Strait.

Should the WWIIBEG be reactivated, it is my plan to give most attention to Volume VII Battle Off Cape Engano as this battle has been the subject of controversy and world interest. My staff would be assigned accordingly in a manner similar to the above.

C. Staff.

In writing the completed volumes, I was often allowed to choose my own staff. This was important as most officers are not qualified in research, and it became necessary to discover, if possible, those who were. Despite this, over the years some of my officers were inferior in this work, and this tended to slow down the rate of completion.

During the above eight years, nearly all of my officers were graduates of the Naval War College, having just completed one of the courses there.

The officers, who may be ordered to assist me in the completion of the Leyte Gulf Study, will, most likely, be retired officers whose research capabilities will not be too well known and who have fallen out of practice in studying naval operations and in maintaining a rigorous daily routine. It can be estimated, therefore, that the efficiency of these officers will, at least at first, be inferior to that of the active duty officers heretofore employed.

Also -- and this is a very important point -- since it usually took the active duty officers about six months to be sufficiently familiar with the background volumes to become productive, it can be safely assumed that the recalled retired officer will require at least the same time.

D. Possibility of Completing the Leyte Gulf Study.

Since 30 June 1964 seems to be the earliest date at which the WWIIBEG can be reactivated, and since the terminal date is set at 30 June 1966, it would appear that a total of twenty-four months will

be available to complete the study. However, since six of these months will be required for background study, it is clear that instead of twenty-four months, a maximum of eighteen months will be available. This figure might well be less, should staff members arrive after 30 June 1964. These conditions did not obtain when the WWIIBEG was operating originally, as the staff members were not detached simultaneously and there was no terminal date. This means that the chance of completing Volumes VI and VII in eighteen or less months is remote. It was for this reason that I told various important Foundations that I required a minimum of four years to complete the study.

While the chance of completing one volume (Volume VII) only is obviously much better, even this is not a certainty, unless the battle analysis proves to be easier to accomplish than is expected. Of course, the fact that Volume VII is partially completed (about 20%) may be very helpful.

E. There seems to be no particular problem as regards office space or financial support. Both seem adequate.

F. Recommendation.

I recommend that since the purpose of the MEMORANDUM of UNDERSTANDING, as defined in paragraph A above is most unlikely of accomplishment the purpose be changed to read "To complete Volume VII, Battle Off Cape Engano."

I further recommend that since Volume VII may not be completed within the terminal date that that volume not be attempted unless you are willing to accept such non-completion. In analyses of this type, where meticulous and careful research is required of many sources of information, it is difficult to operate against a terminal date. This is because honest and thorough battle research often brings out unexpected facts which demand additional unpredicted further verification and analysis.

G. Decision.

If, with the possibility of non-completion in mind, you are still willing to go ahead with the analysis of Volume VII, I am likewise willing to return to active duty for the two years specified in order to endeavor to complete it. In this connection, I should like to re-state what I have stated in other correspondence, that I am not anxious to return to active duty, but, instead, would prefer to complete

8 June 1964

*my studies in a retired status under a Foundation, where I
would have more freedom of action.*

I await your decision.

With best wishes I am, as ever,

Your old friend,

R. W. BATES

*Vice Admiral B. J. Semmes, U. S. Navy
Chief of Naval Personnel
Department of the Navy
Washington 25, D. C.*

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Status (February 1st, 1958) of Naval War College Analysis, Battle for Leyte Gulf:

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Enclosure to ltr from
Rear Admiral A.J. BATES, USN(Ret.)
of 8 June 1964

~~ENCLOSURE (2)~~

0826



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

BUREAU OF NAVAL PERSONNEL

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20370

IN REPLY REFER TO

12 June 1964

Dear Admiral Bates:

I am sorry I was out of town when you visited last week. Your letter was awaiting me on my return Tuesday.

The project is progressing satisfactorily. The establishment papers are awaiting Admiral Ricketts' signature. After that we are on our way. I am enclosing a copy of "Memorandum of Understanding" for your information. This document is the one that awaits Admiral Ricketts' approval. The contents of the memorandum are in accordance with the desires of OP-07, CNP, COMNAVBASE, Newport, President, NWC, and COMONE. The support is substantial and should provide you with the wherewithal to do the job.

I have a copy of your letter to Admiral Semmes. I am pleased that the question of your orders has been resolved. I note that you are concerned as to whether two years will be enough time to complete the task. I suggest at this time that you not be concerned with the time limit. At the end of one year we can evaluate the progress made and then decide if more time is needed.

Regarding assembling your staff, I think this will be the most difficult task of all. The conditions you found in your searches will be true in general. Retired USN and Reserve officers are the sources to draw upon. I am enclosing a resume of a Reserve officer that now is available and has expressed interest in the project. I believe he is as promising a candidate as can be found among the Reserves, and if acceptable he can be ordered to Newport with very little delay.

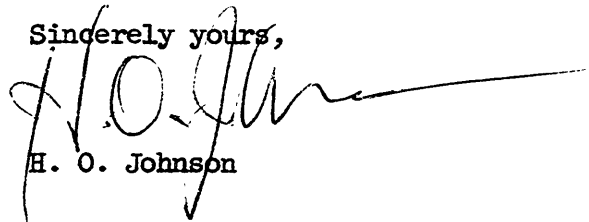
You mentioned Captain Neil Porter, USN (Ret.). Do you desire him and is he willing to come? Shall I correspond with him, or do you desire to continue your negotiations independently? Do you know names of any others who may be willing to participate? In the meantime, I will contact the retired officers activities desk in this Bureau and see what I can come up with. For any likely candidates, I will forward resumes to you for approval.

PEOPLE TO THE FORE IN 1964

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I will be on the west coast for about ten days starting 20 June 1964.
I will be in the office most of the time until then. If you desire I
suggest that you call me at the office collect on OXFORD 42012 some time
prior to 20 June to discuss this letter and other matters.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'H. O. Johnson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rear Admiral Richard W. Bates, USN (Ret.)
12 Mount Vernon Street
Newport, R. I.

Enclosure

12 Mount Vernon Street
Newport, Rhode Island
16 JUNE 1964

Dear Admiral Semmes:

It is with great regret that I find it necessary to withdraw from the "Leyte Gulf" project which we have been discussing, largely by letter, for the past several months. Since I have given my reasons in considerable detail by letter to your Doctor Howard Johnson and since a copy of this letter is attached hereto as an enclosure, I will refrain from further comment here.

I hope that you will understand my position, which I can assure you I took only after considerable meditation. However, there are clearly too many ~~imponderable~~ to make it worthwhile to pursue the research project further.

I especially regret the necessity for this decision because I appreciate the time and effort you and others have given to this matter.

I shall hope to see you and Mrs. Semmes up here in Newport this summer. You would be wise if you would spend some of your vacation -- if and when you get one -- up here in this area where you are so well and favorably known, and which will be the center of much activity. The America's Cup races will be held in September; the Newport Tennis Tournament will be held at the Casino in August (I have a box for this if you wish to use it) and the Jazz Festival will be held in July. In addition, you have your many friends.

With best regards, I am, as ever,

Your old friend,

R. W. BATES

Vice Admiral B. J. Semmes, U. S. Navy
Chief of Naval Personnel
Department of the Navy
Washington 25, D. C.

0829

12 Mount Vernon Street
Newport, Rhode Island

16 JUNE 1964

Dear Admiral Semmes:

It is with great regret that I find it necessary to withdraw from the "Leyte Gulf" project which we have been discussing, largely by letter, for the past several months. Since I have given my reasons in considerable detail by letter to your Doctor Howard Johnson and since a copy of this letter is attached hereto as an enclosure, I will refrain from further comment here.

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R. W. BATES

Vice Admiral B. J. Semmes, U. S. Navy
Chief of Naval Personnel
Department of the Navy
Washington 25, D. C.

0830

12 Mount Vernon Street
Newport, Rhode Island
June 16, 1964

Dear Howard:

Thank you very much for your friendly and instructive talks over the telephone yesterday and today. As a result of these talks, plus my own knowledge of the problems involved, I have been enabled to make a decision. This decision, in simple language, is to drop the whole project. My reasons are:

(a) Since my WWII Battle Evaluation Group was closed in 1958, I have had little interest in completing my study of the "Battle for Leyte Gulf," on active duty. Instead I have sought everywhere to obtain a private sponsor. I have visited numerous Foundations, and have enlisted the support of the Vice Chief of Naval Operations and the Chief of History. Even Fleet Admiral Nimitz was consulted thereon. My reasons for wishing a Foundation should, in view of the summary closing of my WWII BEG, in 1958, be clear to all. However, I had other reasons, notably:

- (1) I would have complete freedom of action.
- (2) I should be better able to obtain a competent staff because I would be able to pay well.
- (3) It would cost me nothing in dollars and cents -- in fact, I would likely get a somewhat increased income.

My reason for agreeing to return to active duty originally (about November, 1963) was because Vice Admiral Smedberg had stated that he wished to complete one more volume of my Leyte series and that I would not be on duty for longer than two years. However, in agreeing to this, I had expected to start months ago, but there were evidently problems which neither he nor I had visualized.

(b) Since talking to you this morning I now note that my group would not be able to start productive work until about May, 1965. This is because you do not anticipate a staff being available before 1 October 1964, and this fact added to the need for about six months "indoctrination", brings us up to 1 May 1965.

0831

Based on the terminal date of 30 June 1966, this allows but ~~fourteen~~ working months to complete the one volume (VII, Battle Off Cape Engano) which was talked about before -- the satisfactory accomplishment of even this part of the work is doubtful. In this connection, I note that you are of the opinion that the time limit means little. However, it does to me, as I have never contemplated returning to active duty for a longer period than the two years above mentioned.

(c) I wonder, if the WWII BEG were reactivated, whether it would ever be allowed to complete the assignment. I cannot remove from my mind the fact that this group was closed in 1958 (before it had completed its project). This was so, despite the fact that I had been promised each year, for eight years, that I would be allowed to complete it and had been repeatedly asked not to quit on it. In your "Memorandum of Understanding" you wisely say, "Additional funds will be provided depending on future evaluation of the project and the availability of funds to support it." This is another way of saying that it might have to be closed, once again before completion, likewise for budgetary reasons.

(d) The financial loss to me, should I return to active duty, while only a secondary consideration, is unusual to say the least. This is because of three factors -- physical disability deduction, social security and social security deduction.

(1) The physical disability deduction has markedly lowered my present taxable income from government sources. Should I return to active duty, this physical disability deduction would not apply and my taxable income from government sources would be about seven times larger than it is now. My outside income, because of this, would also become "much heavier" taxed.

(2) The social security payments of \$102.00 per month, which I now receive, would no longer be paid.

(3) Instead, I would have to pay about \$174.00 per year to the social security fund. This means that on items (2) and (3) above, I would lose \$1,400.00 per year.

In summary, then, I find it advisable to drop the whole project for a number of reasons discussed fully above, of which the principal ones are:

(1) There is no guarantee that this project, anymore than the original project, will be continued after 30 June 1966. The continuance of this project would be dependent on several major factors, the most important of which is the personal understanding and the historical military philosophy of the key senior officers in Washington. The detachment of even one of these might easily result in the dissolution of the WWII BEG before it had completed its mark.

(2) It is highly unlikely that competent officers for the staff will be obtained before 1 October 1964.

(3) It is also highly unlikely that these members of the staff would be able to produce satisfactory work before 1 May 1965.

(4) It has never been my wish to continue on active duty after 30 June 1966. Since it is highly unlikely that even one additional volume of the Leyte series would be completed at that time, it seems unwise to attempt any part of it.

And so with many thanks to you for all of your help and with deep regret that I shall not be able to work for and with you, I am, as ever,

Yours sincerely,

R. W. BATES

**Dr. H. O. Johnson
Bureau of Naval Personnel
Pers-Clb, Room 3072
Department of the Navy
Washington 25, D. C.**

0833

12 Mount Vernon Street
Newport, Rhode Island
16 JUNE 1964

Dear Admiral Semmes:

It is with great regret that I find it necessary to withdraw from the "Leyte Gulf" project which we have been discussing, largely by letter, for the past several months. Since I have given my reasons in considerable detail by letter to your Doctor Howard Johnson and since a copy of this letter is attached hereto as an enclosure, I will refrain from further comment here.

I hope that you will understand my position, which I can assure you I took only after considerable meditation. However, there are clearly too many imponderables to make it worthwhile to pursue the research project further.

I especially regret the necessity for this decision because I appreciate the time and effort you and others have given to this matter.

I shall hope to see you and Mrs. Semmes up here in Newport this summer. You would be wise if you would spend some of your vacation -- if and when you get one -- up here in this area where you are so well and favorably known, and which will be the center of much activity. The America's Cup races will be held in September; the Newport Tennis Tournament will be held at the Casino in August (I have a box for this if you wish to use it) and the Jazz Festival will be held in July. In addition, you have your many friends.

With best regards, I am, as ever,

Your old friend,

R. W. BATES

Vice Admiral B. J. Semmes, U. S. Navy
Chief of Naval Personnel
Department of the Navy
Washington 25, D. C.

0834

29 Mount Vernon Street
Newport, Rhode Island
19 June 1964

Dear Judge:

This letter is to thank you for assisting me to obtain funds and support for the completion of World War II Battle Evaluation Group study "Battle for Leyte Gulf." It is also to express to you my deep disappointment in not being able to accept the terms offered. My reasons are clearly expressed, I think, in the several enclosures. Because of your continuing interest in this project, I am going to expound on these enclosures.

The concept of finishing one more volume of the above study arose with Vice Admiral Smedberg in November, 1963. Part of that unhappy story you already know about. Anyway, I accepted his offer to bring me back to duty as a Rear Admiral to write one additional volume of the Leyte Gulf study, had myself examined physically and checked with the JAG (Rear Admiral Hearn) to be certain that my retirement disability rating was not going to be in jeopardy, and so reported to Smedberg. I was told to go on my usual jaunt to California and he would carry the ball.

I had expected to be on duty in early spring and so on 10 February, I suggested in writing to Admiral Cobb, the present Deputy, that I return to Washington in order to get underway. But I was told to take my time -- that at least 1 1/2 months would pass before they were ready. I called back and forth to Washington about this, partially at my own expense. Finally, near the end of April, because of the PT boat banquet in NY, I came east and went to the Bureau of Personnel where I called on Vice Admiral Semmes to congratulate him on having been made a Vice Admiral and Chief of BuPers. Here I was told that everything was set and they were bringing me back to duty as a Commodore. I temporarily refused and went to Newport, where I thought the matter over. It was not the Commodore-Rear Admiral issue that concerned me -- it was what seemed to be the breaking of a promise, just as had been done in 1958. Meanwhile, on 18 May, I was advised by Admiral Semmes that he had reviewed the situation, in part with you, and by telephone with Vice Admiral Smedberg and that they could offer me Commodore and nothing more. In this connection, Rear Admiral Cobb was present when Vice Admiral Smedberg made the proposition to me and concurred with my statement that Admiral Smedberg had offered to bring me back to duty as a Rear Admiral and that none had had any other idea.

0835

Despite this, on 2 June, I accepted the Commodore rank because the objective of "completing another volume" had become, if not forgotten, at least obscured.

Then I asked for action; and to implement it, I went to Washington on 3 June at my own expense. At this time, I asked Admiral Cobb to please get me some names of prospective staff members from their IBM cards. He gave orders, and I spoke to some Captain about it, but I have not, as yet, received one name from this source. Finally they gave me Dr. H. O. Johnson's "Memorandum of Understanding." This was so confusing to me, and had so many loopholes, that I then and there told Admirals Semmes, Cobb and Irvine that I was unable to do what seemed to be wanted in the two years specified. Admiral Semmes asked me not to make a decision there, but to return to Newport and think it over.

I, therefore, returned to Newport, and on 8 June I wrote to Admiral Semmes and endeavored to explain what I understood the "Memorandum of Understanding" to mean (Enclosure 1). I was not enthusiastic, but I did agree to go ahead with the analysis of Volume VII. Then, a few days later, I received a letter from Doctor Johnson dated 12 June, which said, among other things, that "Regarding the assembling of your staff, I think that this will be the most difficult task of all." He also said that I was not to be concerned with the time limit.

Not being sure of what this meant, I called him on the telephone, twice this week during which times he informed me that he didn't see how he could get me a staff before 1 October, and further said that at the "end of one year, we can evaluate the progress made and then decide if more time is needed." In his "Memorandum of Understanding" he stated, "Additional funds will be provided depending on future evaluation of this project and the availability of funds to support it."

From all of this it was obvious to me that the continued life of the project over two years was dubious to say the least and that the prospect of finishing but one volume in the first two years was, because of continuing delay, in getting me a staff, very doubtful indeed. It seemed to be increasingly becoming a product of diminishing returns.

So, even though I still think it very important to complete VII Battle Off Cape Engano, primarily because Fleet Admiral Halsey's operations in that battle have not as yet been properly presented, and even though I had agreed to do it, I felt that I had to drop the project because I could see only difficulties, as stated in my enclosure (Enclosure 2), and few, if any results. The dragging Fleet tactic, if such it was, had won!

After mailing the above enclosure to Dr. Johnson, I called him on the phone to tell him, at which time he said that I had saved him a lot of trouble. He further said that my use of the word "ponderables" was correct; that they were already pondering how they would finance the project later, or words to that effect.

With warmest personal regards, I am, as ever,

Your old friend,

R. W. BATES

*Rear Admiral E. M. Eller, U. S. Navy
Chief of History
Department of the Navy
Washington 25, D. C.*

0837

29 Mount Vernon Street
Newport, Rhode Island
19 June 1964

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Your old friend,

R. W. BATES

*Rear Admiral E. M. Eller, U. S. Navy
Chief of History
Department of the Navy
Washington 25, D. C.*

0840

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0841

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With warmest personal regards, I am, as ever,

Your old friend,

R. W. BATES

*Rear Admiral E. M. Eller, U. S. Navy
Chief of History
Department of the Navy
Washington 25, D. C.*

0843

14 June 1966

Ode

Upon A Teacup

Once upon a teacup
A bride's green eyes did gaze
Charmed that Katherine Potter's
Beau of bygone days
Had sent to both grand-daughters
Just a year apart
A cup that she might pick up
So delicate and fine
To remind her she's a lady now,
To remember in her heart,
A gentleman who made us two
The Katherine Potters, even then

With love,

Kate

0844

14 June 1966

Ode
Upon A Teacup

Once upon a teacup
A bride's green eyes did gaze
Charmed that Katherine Potter's
Beau of bygone days
Had sent to both grand-daughters
Just a year apart
A cup that she might pick up
So delicate and fine
To remind her she's a lady now,
To remember in her heart,
A gentleman who made us two
The Katherine Potters, even then.

With love,
Katie



0845



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

BUREAU OF NAVAL PERSONNEL

WASHINGTON 25, D.C.

IN REPLY REFER TO

23 JUN 1964

Dear Admiral:

I have just received your letter of 16 June with your decision to withdraw from the "Leyte Gulf" project. Believe me, I understand your position perfectly, and the more I think of it, the more certain I am that your decision is the correct one.


Two years is not much time in the business of trying to write a book, and I know that writing by the clock is most difficult. In addition, there is no way of being sure that money for your project will not dry up. Please be assured that I do appreciate your position, and I sincerely regret that conditions are such that we could not establish a Foundation for your project.

Your mention of the many activities in Newport this summer leads me to hope that perhaps I can get in a short visit, although at present my schedule does not provide many openings for things I'd really like to do.

Again, may I express my regret that we were not able to arrange for the completion of your "Leyte Gulf" project.

Warmest regards *in which Kit joins.*

Most sincerely,


B. L. SEMMES, JR.

Rear Admiral R. W. Bates, USN (Ret.)
12 Mount Vernon Street
Newport, R.I.

0846



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

DIRECTOR OF NAVAL HISTORY

10 July 1964

Dear Rafe:

Returning from a fortnight's absence, I found on my desk your distressing letter of 19 June. I had thought that despite the problems and changes which you did not like that we were underway on this important volume. I know that B.J. Semmes will feel badly about this because when he talked to me on the telephone, as he did twice, he sincerely wanted to go ahead with the project. A principal reason was his admiration for you and for what you have contributed to the Navy and the country.

As we have just seen in the tragedy of Claude Ricketts, one never can tell what the next minute brings. Fortunately it can be light as well as dark -- therefore the dark is never as bad as it seems at the moment since it may be the unseen route to light. May this be true in the case of your study and may another way open before long.

You will find the enclosure of interest.

Best wishes.


E. M. ELLER

Rear Admiral R. W. Bates, USN (Ret.)
29 Mount Vernon Street
Newport, Rhode Island

0847